

**AALL CASE STUDY:  
WASHINGTON STATE LAW LIBRARIANS WIN FIGHT TO RESTORE FUNDING  
TO KING COUNTY LAW LIBRARY**

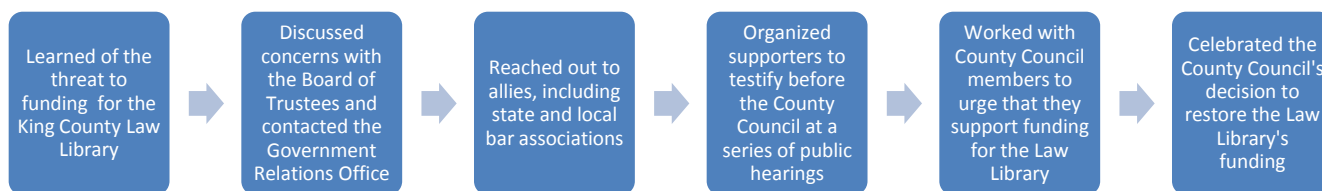
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***The Challenge***

In September 2009, King County Executive Kurt Triplett announced that his proposed 2010 budget would include no funding for the King County Law Library at the Norm Maleng Regional Justice Center in Kent, Washington. Without funding, the branch would have been forced to close at the end of 2009.

The library's closure would have meant cutting off access to the print and electronic legal resources that judges, county officials, members of the bar and members of the public rely on to meet their research needs. This case study looks at the successful efforts by Law Library leaders to prove to the Martin Luther King County Council that the Law Library is an important institution and needs adequate funding to continue to serve its diverse user community.

***The Response***



***Learned of the budget cuts and reached out to allies***

Facing imminent closure, library leaders immediately discussed their concerns with members of the King County Law Library Board of Trustees, contacted the Government Relations Office and reached out to potential allies. King County Superior Court Judge Mary Yu, president of the Board of Trustees, expressed her strong support right away and was an invaluable champion throughout the fight to restore the library's funding.

In late September 2009, James A. Bamberger, Director of the Washington State Office of Civil Legal Aid, wrote a letter in support of the Law Library to the King County Executive. He noted that the Law Library “has become the single most important source of legal information and materials for unrepresented low income people in the South King County.” Having the support of this state judicial branch agency was extremely valuable in demonstrating to state officials how important the Law Library is to the residents of the county, especially to low income people.

Law Library leaders also contacted the state and local bar associations. The Washington State Bar Association Board of Governors issued a resolution in support, which stated that, “in a system heavily dependent on legal codes, precedents, and interpretations, the Law Library is a crucial tool in providing a means of access to those communities that may lack other means.”

### ***Organized supporters to testify before the County Council***

The Martin Luther King County Council held four public hearings on the proposed budget, during which Judge Yu, members of the King County Bar Association, individual attorneys and many members of the public testified. Judge Yu offered her strong support for the Law Library, stating in her testimony that, “We firmly believe that as long as there are court hearings being held in this courthouse, there needs to be a law library.” A pro se patron eloquently expressed in her testimony the importance of the library: “The Library is not a luxury but a necessity of life. It is a place to obtain information and as Thomas Jefferson said ‘Information is the currency of democracy.’”

### ***Celebrated the County Council's decision to restore funding to the Law Library***

After receiving an overwhelming response in opposition to the cuts to the Law Library’s funding, the Martin Luther King County Council voted unanimously (9-0) in November 2009 to restore its funding. In its Budget Ordinance, the Council made clear its support for the Law Library, stating that: “This budget allows for the continued operation of the second King County Law Library at the Norm Maleng Regional Justice Center in Kent, as law libraries are vital services for citizens without attorneys, known as pro se defendants, and their families.”

The County Council’s decision was a remarkable demonstration of support for the Law Library in the face of the \$56 million dollar County deficit for 2010. It would not have been possible without the leadership of local law librarians and the support of Judge Yu, the Office of Civil Legal Aid, the state and local bar associations and the many library users who spoke out about the need to keep the Law Library open.